

TOUR SMART: VISITING FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

The Navy relies on Family Child Care (FCC) providers to help meet our child care needs (46% of our total child care spaces and growing). The military has the most comprehensive, well-managed FCC system in the country. In fact, the President chose to highlight our program as a model to be shared with the civilian sector. The Navy recognizes the value of its FCC providers and encourages you to visit FCC homes to promote a better understanding of the many benefits of this program.

Although FCC has been in existence for a long time in this nation, it has basically been an informal network of individual providers running their own programs with little assistance or support. Only recently has the public re-looked this often under-valued form of child care with the intent to better validate, recognize and standardize FCC in an organized and systematic way. Family Child Care providers are working hard to improve the image of their profession.

BENEFITS OF MILITARY FAMILY CHILD CARE

- 1. Gives parents another viable child care option to allow them to work.**
- 2. Is the option of choice for many parents.**
- 3. Supports the mission by providing care for unique circumstances such as care for children with special needs, extended hours and evening/ weekend care.**
- 4. Encourages mixed age groupings so siblings can be cared for together in the same environment and younger children can learn from older ones.**
- 5. Provides small group environment for children who are not ready for a large group experience.**
- 6. Allows children to be cared for within their own neighborhood.**
- 7. Provides small business opportunity for family members and helps increase economic self-sufficiency of family unit.**
- 8. Demonstrates military's commitment to ensuring safe, healthy child care programs run by professional, nurturing adults through screening, standards, training, certification and monitoring of providers.**
- 9. Is easily "right-sized" to accommodate the needs of each installation.**

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT TO A FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME...

As you walk up to the door:

Note the window emblem identifying this as a *Certified* Navy FCC home. This emblem indicates the provider has had extensive child development training, completed background checks, and that the home has been inspected for health and safety standards.

Upon entering the home, and signing the visitors book:

Note the space for children to place their belongings (a piece of the home belongs to them) and space for parents and children to have smooth transitions from parent to provider and vice versa.

Also note the many contents of the Bulletin Board that helps communicate with parents and is reviewed during the monthly inspections. The Bulletin Board should contain the weekly USDA menus, documented Fire Drills, substitute provider and emergency care Information, DOD Child Abuse/Safety Violation Hotline Poster, weekly activity schedule, touch policy, and a section for parents.

Once inside the home take a look at the environment:

The environment is important because children spend most of their waking hours here and need to feel they belong. There needs to be adequate space and challenging activities for children to positively grow and develop.

a. The provider can tell you how she has successfully combined her child care business and her family space. Providers are not required to turn their homes into “mini child care centers” but are expected to create child-oriented environments in their quarters. For example, is there children’s artwork posted at child’s eye level? A step stool at the bathroom sink? Do children have access to different areas of the home without being scrunched into a back bedroom? Are appropriate materials stored and labeled on low shelves for easy access?

b. Ask the provider to explain how the activities support each child’s growth and development. Are all age groups working at different projects designed for their age? What kinds of equipment and materials are available to children?

c. Ask how the provider administers medications, screens children for illness, or informs parents of accidents and illness. Look for ways in which the provider protects children’s safety such as covered electrical outlets and if toys with small pieces are safe from toddler’s hands. Outside areas should have safe, open spaces for children to run, and gardening tools, lawnmowers, and grills should be secured from small hands.

Suggested Discussion Topics

We need your help in promoting the “Navy Message” regarding FCC policies. The following may provide some helpful discussion points and the provider answers that you *ideally* might expect to hear.

Navy Message	The Provider’s Response
1. FCC providers run their own business in on or off base housing. Navy monitors, trains and certifies them. All training and a lending library are free to all certified providers.	The FCC staff is always helpful! They gave me a sample parent contract, provide a referral system and are always available to answer questions. The ongoing training helps me to understand and cope with the children’s behaviors and the lending library helps me plan age appropriate activities and reduces my out of pocket expenses.
2. Providers can enroll in the USDA food program and get reimbursed for meals served.	I get reimbursed for the meals and snacks I serve which adds to my income. And, with the nutrition training I received, I serve better meals and snacks to my own family.
3. Navy needs more infant spaces. Subsidizing FCC homes is much more economical than converting one of the center pre-school rooms into an infant room or building new centers.	Economically, I couldn’t afford to care for infants because I couldn’t lower my ratio, and parents could not afford to pay me what I would have to charge. The subsidy program helps make infant care affordable for parents and me.
4. Providers support the mission by caring for children whose parents work extended hours.	The parents of one of the children I care for are watchstanders so he spends the night twice a week. It’s like he’s a part of our family! I had his Mom read stories into a cassette player so she can “read” a story to him before bed.
5. Providers also provide hourly care.	I didn’t want to provide care every day all day, and parents needed hourly care spaces on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 - 2. It works out perfectly and I’m always full!
6. FCC is a transferable career.	I’ve been a provider for 10 years. I’ve lived on Navy and Marine Corps bases. My status as a Family Child Care provider always went with me and I know the FCC staff will help me get started as soon as possible. That’s one reason I stay with FCC - I can count on it and it’s allowed me to take care of my own children.

We welcome your feedback. If you have any questions or comments please call Kathleen O’Connor, Family Child Care Program (NPC-659) at DSN 882-6699 or Commercial 901-874-6699.

THANK YOU